

north shore news

North Shore voters start to return ballots

Voter turnout rates between 15 and 22 per cent locally

Maria Spitale-Leisk / North Shore News

April 26, 2015 12:00 AM

Between 15 and 22 per cent of North Shore voters have cast their ballots for the Yes or No sides in the region-wide TransLink vote.

Local residents fall in the middle of the pack for interim voter turnout in the TransLink plebiscite. As of Friday, 15 per cent out of about 34,300 eligible City of North Vancouver voters had turned in their ballots, while their district counterparts fared a bit higher at 20 per cent participation for about 60,600 eligible voters, according to Elections BC.

In West Vancouver, 22 per cent of about 30,100 potential voters have cast their ballots. The non-binding vote asks whether or not Metro Vancouver residents would support a new 0.5 per cent increase to the provincial sales tax to be dedicated to the mayors' transportation and transit plan.

The City of Vancouver currently has one of the higher participation rates at

25 per cent, which is close to the overall 22 per cent voter turnout across the Lower Mainland.

One factor affecting turnout is the timing of when packages were sent out, which was staggered over a two-week period starting March 16.

North Shore residents should have received packages the following week, between March 24 and 26.

District of North Vancouver Mayor Richard Walton said he isn't sure how relevant the North Shore's numbers are when compared to the rest of the region. Walton said a bigger concern is his understanding that Elections BC was at one point a month behind in processing people wanting to register to vote. Walton said he learned that while canvassing students at Capilano University.

In a close vote, that could be an issue, Walton said.

Elections BC spokesperson Don Main disputes the one-month backlog saying the most new voters had to wait was a week. He said it took a few days longer to process the voters who registered online as opposed to those who phoned in for packages.

Jordan Bateman with the Canadian Taxpayers' Federation said it might be too early to judge voter turnout on the North Shore.

"There could be literally tens of thousands of North Van ballots sitting in those bags waiting to be sorted," said Bateman. "Next week we will get a much better handle as to what the turnout should look like for those smaller cities."

Metro residents have until midnight on May 15 to request a voting package from Elections BC.

© 2015 North Shore News